

productivity and job creation. We should be looking at ways to minimize the damaging effects of frivolous lawsuits, excessive regulation and taxation, and rising health care costs, just to name a few.

The critical part is that our job growth agenda has got to be a job-creation agenda. We need to recognize that we are on the right track and we can do even better.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE MONEY IS THERE FOR EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, we are going to be leaving Washington, D.C. this afternoon and going back to our home districts, and it saddens me that we are leaving Washington without extending the unemployment benefits that are so desperately needed by so many unemployed Americans.

Just in Ohio alone, since George W. Bush became President of our country, we have lost 236,000 jobs, and 170,000 of those jobs have been high-wage jobs with good benefits. Across the Nation, some 3 million jobs have been lost under the President's watch, making him the first President since Herbert Hoover to actually have a net loss of jobs during his tenure as President. That makes it all the more troubling to me that with so much job loss in our country and so many unemployed workers in my State of Ohio, that we would leave Washington, D.C. for this extended vacation without extending unemployment benefits to our unemployed constituents.

The fact is that in Ohio alone, already, 31,300 workers have exhausted their benefits; and between now and June, this will be 2,200 workers per week who will have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

In my region of eastern Ohio in the Steubenville area, 380 workers have already exhausted their benefits; and by the end of June, that number will swell to 700 workers.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics are not merely numbers; they represent workers. They represent the heads of households. They represent parents who need to provide for themselves and their children, to be able to contribute to their communities and their churches.

That is what we are facing in Ohio. It just is amazing to me that in light of these circumstances, the President's Treasury Secretary, Mr. John Snow,

came to Ohio last week and he verbally defended the outsourcing, the sending of American jobs to other countries, indicating that it strengthens our economy to do so. How can Treasury Secretary Snow or President Bush come to Ohio and look unemployed people in the eye and tell them that they care about them when they deny them these needed resources?

The money is there, Mr. Speaker. What I am suggesting and calling for will not result in an increase in taxes. There are multiple billions of dollars in the unemployment fund, money that has been placed there by workers and employees for just such a time as this. Yet it seems to me that perhaps out of an insensitivity to what is really happening, and unawareness of the tragedy of unemployment, or maybe a hardness of heart, this House and this administration will not support the extension of these benefits. I assume it is because if we extended the benefits it would be an admission that we have not solved the problem of joblessness in this country. Maybe we do not want to add to the accounting that would increase the amount of the deficit. But I want to tell my colleagues, the leadership of this House and the President of the United States have no hesitancy in increasing the deficit if it is necessary in order to give tax breaks to the richest people in this country.

Think of this: here we are leaving Washington, D.C. today, going home and knowing that there are thousands and thousands of unemployed workers who are, on a weekly basis, exhausting their benefits, and who, through no fault of their own, they have lost their jobs.

□ 1415

But through the resources of this government we can help them. We could lessen the pain that they feel. We could make it possible for them to continue to provide the needed resources for their families. And, yet, we are turning our back on them in their hour of need.

I hope that when President Bush comes to Ohio for his next visit the constituents in Ohio will ask him, Mr. President, why were you unwilling to support an extension of unemployment benefits to those who are out of work?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CONYERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to follow my fine colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), who I think touched on some very important points that we need to address in this Congress and we should not be leaving.

Many of us to go back to our districts, some of us to go on Easter vacation, before we address this issue of unemployment benefits; and I think this issue illustrates for the country exactly how removed the United States Congress actually is from the problems that we are dealing with in middle America.

It is easy for politicians to mouth words that somehow we are supposed to address the problems that we have in this country. But the American people are beginning to realize that the rhetoric that has been coming from the Nation's Capitol, the rhetoric that has been coming from this administration, has not been addressing the issues that face average working families in the State of Ohio. The unemployment rate actually crept up to 5.7 percent.

Do we want jobs to be created in this country? Absolutely. You will never hear me, or I think any other Member of this body, somehow downplay job growth as if it is a bad thing. Because we want the American people to go back to work.

But there is so much that needs to be done with this economy. Let us look for a second at the issue of the minimum wage. I want to talk about a couple of other issues, but for now we want to talk about the minimum wage.

During most of the 1960s and 1970s, working at the minimum wage kept a family of three out of poverty. Today, that same family is 24 percent below the poverty level.

The purchasing power of the current \$5.15 per hour minimum wage is well below that of the 1960s and 1970s level. From its peak in 1968, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has declined over 36 percent.

If you are wealthy in the United States of America, you are doing pretty well, and you get all the benefits

and all the energy of this legislative body to help you in any way necessary. You need tax cuts? We are for tax cuts. You need subsidies? We are for subsidies. Whatever it is that corporate America, the top 1 and 2 percent of the people living in this country need, they get.

But people living in the United States of America who want unemployment benefits, they are not working, their unemployment benefits are going to run out, this legislative body has no time for you. If you are making the minimum wage and you are 36 percent below the purchasing power the same wage of 1968, we do not have time for you.

I think it is a shame that this Congress dictates its policies by who is contributing to the campaigns and who is making the biggest donations, and that is the problem. That is what the American people are going to have to decide in this next election that is coming up, is are the money people going to win out or the people who need help in this country?

Look at the kind of future we are leaving to our kids. Almost a \$600 billion deficit. We give tax cuts now, we borrow money to pay for them, and we put the burden on our kids who are going to be left to foot the bill for this thing. It is wrong. It is a tax for our kids that they are eventually going to have to pay.

We talk about outsourcing jobs and competing on a global economy. We are underfunding No Child Left Behind by \$1.5 billion a year in the State of Ohio, \$1.5 billion a year. We say we want everyone to participate in the global economy, we say we want to move the last 25 percent of the kids in this country over the finish line, make them proficient, let them be happy, have the education they need to be able to compete in this country, but we are not willing to put the money up because we have to give tax cuts to the top 1 percent. That is the priority of this legislative body.

If we are going to outsource and if we are going to compete on a global level, which everyone has seemed to have agreed that we need to do, then we better put the resources in educating our kids. We better make sure we have an adequate, livable wage for people. Because there is going to be displacement. We better make sure everybody has health care in this country.

The American people are beginning to recognize that the rhetoric from this body and the rhetoric from this administration doesn't match the reality that needs to be addressed in middle America. It is time that we start addressing it.

OUR DEPENDENCE ON OPEC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to some of the re-

marks on the floor this evening. We had a gentleman, one of our Members from California, say how good the economy looks to him. And yet if you read the newspaper today, U.S.A. Today indicates Gateway is going to be closing all of its stores around our country, the struggling PC computer maker, and laying off 2,500 more workers.

In the same newspaper we see a headline, "No Shortage of Oil, Saudi Arabia Says." Saudi Arabia sought to quiet critics of OPEC's decision this week to cut oil production, arguing there are ample supplies, despite decade-high gasoline prices. Their foreign affairs advisor to the Crown Prince said there is no shortage of crude oil.

I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to this chart, which shows that the United States since the mid-1980s and every succeeding year has amassed more job loss and greater trade deficit than ever before in the history of our Nation. This year, the trade deficit is going to go over \$580 billion. This is an unbelievable number. That means more imports coming into our country than our exports going out. We are exporting jobs and we are importing products from every other place in the world.

Someone ought to really pay attention in the executive branch, and the Members of Congress who brag how great this is better pay attention to the fundamentals that are driving us in the wrong direction. One of those fundamentals involves rising gasoline prices and rising petroleum prices because we are not energy independent here at home. We need a President and we need a Congress that will make America energy independent again.

Here is another chart. This chart shows over a period of 25 years every single year the amount of petroleum that we consume and how much every year comes from abroad. The Middle East, OPEC, controls half of what flows into this economy. Every time a U.S. consumer goes to the gas pump, at least 7 or 8 cents of what you spend per dollar for every gallon you buy goes to Saudi Arabia, a very undemocratic place, one of the worst dictatorships in the world, no matter how much sweetener they try to put on it; 2 or 3 cents goes to Kuwait and Iraq, all places without democratic governments in place.

It has been happening for a long time. It just did not start. But it has been getting worse, and the job loss in our country has really been getting worse. Good jobs with benefits that people can depend upon, retirement programs that cannot be taken away, and a chance for children to go on to college without becoming debtors, the hole we have been digging has been getting deeper every year.

A gentleman writes a letter to the editor today to U.S.A. Today. He is from out in Michigan. He says that everybody wants free trade, but it seems strange to me that the most powerful

Nation on this earth can do nothing to stop the collusion, he says, among the organization of petroleum-exporting countries and our own oil companies to drive up the price of oil.

Here in Washington last night I was watching the television, and Chevron-Texaco had this big ad about how great they were except for one thing, all that oil comes from someplace else and contributes to this rising share of imported petroleum and to the amassing trade deficit that is a damper, a huge damper on creating wealth inside this economy because we are siphoning it out of our own pockets and giving it to someone else.

Imagine if we put those dollars to work to create a new industry across rural America, the biofuels industry, where we ripen ethanol production, soy diesel production, at a level where our farmers could be earning money from the marketplace, not from the Federal Government subsidy that goes to them. Imagine if we really were serious about fuel cell production, imagine if we really tried to bring modern hydrogen production to this country and push our photovoltaic production from the sun, energy from the sun to the limit, to the limit.

NASA has done a great job of helping us move the technology to where it is today, but that is where America needs to move. We do not have to have more job loss. We do not have to have rising trade deficits. We need a government in this country that is going to make us energy independent again and begin creating jobs here at home for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD additional extraneous material.

PRESSURE OPEC TO LOWER GAS PRICES

Everybody wants free trade. But it seems strange to me that the most powerful nation on this earth can do nothing to stop the collusion I see among the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and our own oil companies to drive up the price of oil ("OPEC votes to cut oil output, starting today," News, Thursday).

Why can't the U.S. work with our non-OPEC industrialized allies and other nations that also need a steady supply of cheap petroleum and take retaliatory economic action by withholding essential goods and services, or even military action? We need to give the OPEC cartel a taste of its own medicine.

DONALD SEAGLE,
Ishpeming, Mich.

GATEWAY TO CLOSE ALL STORES, FIRE 2,500 (By Michelle Kessler)

Struggling PC maker Gateway said Thursday that it plans to close all 188 of its retail stores and lay off 2,500 workers.

The stores will close April 9, Gateway says. Its computers will still be sold on Gateway's Web site and via phone.

NO SHORTAGE OF OIL, SAUDI ARABIA SAYS

Saudi Arabia sought Thursday to quiet critics of OPEC's decision to cut oil production, arguing there are ample supplies despite decade-high prices. "There is no shortage of crude oil," said Adel Al-Jubeir, foreign affairs adviser to the Crown Prince of